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HUGGER - MUGGER

A FARCE IN ONE ACT

BY

H. SAVILE CLARKE

NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
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HUGGER-MUGGER

CHARACTERS

HORATIO NELSON HUGGER (*a Mendicant and
Medium*)
MOSES MUGGER (*a dealer in Marine Stores*)
A CUSTOMER

254434

18

3

HUGGER - MUGGER

SCENE: MUGGER's Lodgings. *A shabbily furnished room with door, C., and windows R. C. and L. C.; in the latter are marine stores; fireplace, R., but no furniture on that side of a chalk mark drawn down C. of stage; tables, chairs, drawers, shelf, cupboard, and various pictures and picture-frames, L.; shelf strongly made over door, C.*

(MUGGER discovered drawing the chalk line down stage, C.)

MUGGER. (*After drawing the chalk line*) There, that makes the other side of the room into a very eligible unfurnished apartment. No one can call it furnished, for a fireplace isn't furniture, and I've taken down the blind, and that line is the partition between me and my lodger. It's quite enough to keep us private, that, and still I can see his little games if he's up to any: but he'll have to get up considerably before the early bird if he takes in Moses Mugger! Yes! that makes a nice room that line does, quite an eligible apartment. All apartments are eligible as I ever heard tell of, just as all shopkeepers, barring that publican next door, are respectable. Now I've nothing to do but to sort my marine stores and wait for my lodger. He promised to come early in the morning. (*A loud double knock heard outside*) Ah! there he is. I won't go directly

and then he'll think I keep a servant, for they're never in a hurry, and perhaps it'll please him to think so for a bit. (*Knock heard again*) Ah! a very respectable knock. I can always reckon a man up by a look at his boots and the way he knocks at a door,—I haven't seen this chap's boots yet, but I should say from his knock he's a good opinion of himself. (*Knock heard again louder than ever, MUGGER goes to door and opens it*)

(*Enter HUGGER, c., with a camp stool and a small bundle in a pocket-handkerchief.*)

MUGGER. (*Bowing*) Glad to see you, sir.

HUGGER. Ah! thanks, my good man Are you the landlord's valet, or——

MUGGER. I'm the landlord, sir, and you are——

HUGGER. Mr. Hugger, sir, at your service. Horatio Nelson Hugger. I am named after England's greatest naval commander, because my father had only one eye and one arm, and because my mother's name was Emma, and she was always understood to be like Lady Hamilton. I may add that my father also resembled England in Nelson's signal, for he always expected every man to do *his* duty.

MUGGER. You are welcome, sir. I trust you will like your apartment.

HUGGER. I dare say I shall. Will you show it to me?

MUGGER. (*Pointing R.*) There, sir.

HUGGER. Eh? (*Looking all round*) This room; but I wrote that I desired an unfurnished apartment

MUGGER. Exactly so, sir; and on that side of the partition you will find no furniture.

HUGGER. That side of the partition? (*Aside*) The man's mad! Horatio Nelson—nerve yourself

for an encounter with a lunatic! (*Aloud*) I see no partition.

MUGGER. It is nevertheless visible, sir—just before you.

HUGGER. Hem! The undressed eye fails to perceive it. Have you a microscope?

MUGGER. That chalk mark on the floor, sir, at your feet, is the partition. This side is my room, furnished. That side is your room, unfurnished. You will remember that I said on my little card that the apartment was semi-detached!

HUGGER. Ugh!—that appears to be demi-semi-detached. But no matter, I did not expect marble halls for eighteen-pence a-week.

MUGGER. You will find it very comfortable, sir. When does your furniture arrive?

HUGGER. My furniture? It is here! (*Shows the camp-stool*) I have never dared to store it since the fire at the Pantechnicon. My luggage (*Showing bundle*) is here also.

MUGGER. But, won't you want a chair and table?

HUGGER. Well, I was brought up in luxury, and, now you mention it, I could do with a chair and a table. and, by the way, there's no blind. I'm accustomed to being a public character, but the gaze of the populace might prove embarrassing while dressing.

MUGGER. Very well, but then it'll be a furnished apartment, and I shall want more for it. (*As he speaks he places a chair, table, and blind, R.*)

HUGGER. Mercenary being—how much?

MUGGER. Sixpence a week.

HUGGER. It is yours.

MUGGER. No it isn't—not yet. (*Holds out his hand*)

HUGGER. 'Tis ever thus—the gold won by honest toil goes to fatten an avaricious dealer in marine

stores! Here you are, Mr. ——. By the way, what's your mercenary name?

MUGGER. Mugger, sir—Moses Mugger.

HUGGER. Well, then, honest Moses, let us be friends! Let me visit you when heart yearns to heart! What are chalk lines that they should divide sympathetic souls?

MUGGER. (*Aside*) He's a swindler; I'll lay my life upon it, or he wouldn't patter such sentiment! (*Aloud*) Well, then, Mr. Horatio Hugger—

HUGGER. Horatio Nelson Hugger, if you please, landlord. I am named after England's greatest naval commander, because—

MUGGER. Thank you; you mentioned that before. Well, you can sit here a bit. Will you have a pipe?

HUGGER. Well, I am not an habitual smoker—it doesn't agree with me; but still; to oblige you, my good host—

MUGGER. Oh, don't oblige me, if it doesn't agree with you—you might be took bad.

HUGGER. No, no, Moses; I've nothing to do with illness, except professionally! (*They seat themselves at each side of table, L.; and MUGGER having placed pipes and tobacco on table, they commence smoking*)

MUGGER. Why, you don't mean to say you're a doctor, or a monthly nurse?

HUGGER. No, Mugger—I am a mendicant!

MUGGER. Thank ye! Never bothers my head about riddles—give it up!

HUGGER. In plain words, then, I am a gentleman beggar.

MUGGER. Are you? It strikes me, then, there's plenty of your sort about! A good many gentlemen are beggars, though it don't seem to pinch their stomachs much when they are.

HUGGER. There are many different occupations open to a man—I am also a medium. I can call

up your departed relations at five bob a head, and a reduction on taking a quantity.

MUGGER. Can you really now! I hope you won't bring my old woman back—she might catch cold with the change of climate.

HUGGER. Yes, I'm a most powerful medium; in fact, the spirits are always sloping round with me, like tame cats.

MUGGER. You don't say so! You make me quite nervous. Are there any with you now?

HUGGER. Not exactly. I left John Bunyan outside.

MUGGER. What, at the public?

HUGGER. Peace, scoffer, or he may hear you! and spirits are very cantankerous; they whack you over the head like anything.

MUGGER. I humbly beg Mr. Bunyan's pardon. You make me quite nervous.

HUGGER. Let me restore you then; talking is dry work—can't you go and procure a slight stimulant? Unless my eyes deceived me, there is a public-house next door; and they don't often deceive me in the matter of public-houses!

MUGGER. Well, give us the money. (*Aside*) I wonder if I dare leave him?

HUGGER. There you are, landlord. Be speedy, for I was born under a thirsty star.

MUGGER. (*Aside*) Aye, and a priggish one, I'll be bound! I'll keep an eye on this cove. (*Exit, c.*)

HUGGER. (*Starting up and prying about*) This Mugger's a miser, I'll swear. If I could only discover his store! (*Looks in drawers, etc.*—MUGGER appears outside at window, R. C., and secretly watches him) No, there's nothing here! And, by-the-bye, I must secrete my own money. It's not safe to carry one's little board about with one. (*Goes to table, R., opens small drawer, puts money in, locks it up, and puts the key in his pocket*—

MUGGER *makes a gesture of triumph*) There. I think that will be safe!

(*Enter MUGGER, with beer, c.*)

MUGGER. Here's the beer!

HUGGER. Good, my Ganymede!

MUGGER. Your *what*? If you begin calling names, you'll get the worst of it!

HUGGER. 'Twas a compliment, good landlord. I see, though your manners are those of a duke out at the elbows, your classical education has been neglected.

MUGGER. Very likely; but for all that I'm a buster at bad language.

HUGGER. Give me your hand, I honour a buster. Pass the beer. "I drink to Master Bardolph and to all." See Shakespeare, *passim*. (*Drinks*)

MUGGER. I wish you would pass him. (*Takes hold of the quart measure*) Drat Shakespeare.

HUGGER. With all my heart, Moses; a popular writer, but very much overrated. But how goes business, Mr. Mugger, you make heaps of money, eh?

MUGGER. Not much. Marine stores ain't what they used to be, and I've been obliged to come down in the world and sell pictures; and that leaves me no money to invest.

HUGGER. (*Aside*) Ha!—"invest"—now I know where to have him! (*Aloud*) Investment is a great thing, Mr. Mugger.

MUGGER. I believe you—why I've nearly made my fortune lots of times.

HUGGER. Indeed! and how did you miss it?

MUGGER. Why, if you'll believe me, whenever I had spotted a real good thing, my funds would never run to paper and stamps to apply for shares. Just my luck! But how does your begging get on?

HUGGER. Passably, sir, passably. I have been doing the blind dodge lately; but really rolling one's sightless orbs is so deuced fatiguing, and gives an air of permanent vacuity to one's face.

MUGGER. The blind dodge. Did you ever stand in Tottenham Court Road?

HUGGER. Yes, frequently.

MUGGER. Then blarm me if I didn't give you a penny one day. Oh! what a flat I must have been.

HUGGER. Generous being. But my blind get up is nothing to my attenuated cripple, with the picture of the accident.

MUGGER. What at the mill, with the legs and arms flying about, and the blood all over the picture, as if it had been put on with a squirt?

HUGGER. Yes.

MUGGER. Why I gave you another penny. Cuss me, Mr. Hugger, if I don't think I've been keeping you for weeks.

HUGGER. Bless you, my benefactor. I will return your kindness, I will be a brother to you.

MUGGER. No, thankye. I had one brother, and he was too much for me. He got me quodded.

HUGGER. Well, then, make it father; should be charmed to be sister to you if feasible.

MUGGER. Oh! stash that. How about some more beer?

HUGGER. Certainly. Allow me to go this time. (*Aside*) I've got another suit of clothes round the corner, and I'll try it on with Moses. (*Exit, c.*)

MUGGER. Well, he's a ruin un anyway. It's very well I know where his tin is. But I hope he won't bring any of his blooming spirits here. I've always heard there's a desperate want of principle among 'em, and I'm an honest man I am.

(*Enter HUGGER disguised as financial agent, c.—*
MUGGER *does not know him.*)

HUGGER. Is—a—Mr. Hugger in?

MUGGER. No, yes, that is not precisely.

HUGGER. (*Aside*) Prevaricating old scoundrel. (*Aloud*) Ah! I wished to see him on some important business,—a new speculation.

MUGGER. Oh! *that* alters the case. I am in his confidence in all such matters. In fact I manage them for him.

HUGGER. (*Struggling with rage*) Indeed! May I ask if you have known him long?

MUGGER. Bless you, sir, for years. I have been a father to him! He cut his eye teeth under my watchful care, and I spanked him with parental impartiality.

HUGGER. (*Aside*) The old rascal, and I never saw him till to-day. (*Aloud*) Then I can safely trust you with the details of this scheme?

MUGGER. Surely, sir, surely. (*Rubbing hands and looking eager*)

HUGGER. Are you an investor yourself? You look like a man, excuse me for saying so, who is "warm," very "warm," sir.

MUGGER. (*Deprecatingly*) I have done fairly, sir, and I *may* be tempted, what is your scheme?

HUGGER. A little thing of my own, sir. A unique idea. "The Nursemaid's Protection Society for the Suppression of Soldiers," capital ten thousand pounds, in shares of ten pounds each, of which only half will be called up in the first instance.

MUGGER. An excellent idea, sir. I really think I *will* have a few shares.

HUGGER. (*Aside*) This is glorious, if only I can catch the old villain. (*Aloud*) How many shall I put you down for, sir?

MUGGER. Well, let me see how much money I have—(*Goes to HUGGER's drawer, where the money is, takes another key out of his pocket, and deliberately unlocks it—HUGGER looking on in horror*)

and rage) Ah! I think I'll have one share. Here are five pounds.

HUGGER. (*Choking with rage*) Thank you. By the way, is this investment for yourself or—or Mr. Hugger?

MUGGER. Oh! for myself. Put down Moses Mugger, Esq., I'll ask Hugger to invest when he comes in.

HUGGER. (*Grimly*) Oh! you'll ask Hugger—will you—thank you, sir. Good day, sir,—don't forget to ask Hugger. (*Aside,—going out*) Oh! the hoary old villain, won't I be even with him for this. (*Exit, c.*)

MUGGER. Now if that investment turns out well, I shall, of course, refund Hugger his cash. I didn't do it in his name, for I'm too conscientious, it would have made him responsible,—now *I'm* responsible, and Hugger can't lose. What a thing it is to be an honest man. By the way, Hugger's a long time about bringing the beer, I'll go and look after him. (*Exit, c.*)

(*Enter HUGGER directly afterwards, c.*)

HUGGER. Now the coast's clear, and I'll have a rise out of the old varmint. Some of the neighbours tell me that he most shamefully ill-used his wife. I'll be a spirit, I will, and stir up his nasty evil old conscience. Ah! I hear him coming! (*Gets on a chair and climbs up to the shelf above the door, c., where he lies*)

(*Enter MUGGER, c.*)

MUGGER. He wasn't at the pub.; and he isn't here. Dear me! can he have bolted? How very lucky it was that I took his money and invested it for him. (*HUGGER groans, MUGGER starts violently*)

Ah! what was that? (HUGGER *groans again, and gives a tap*) There it is again! Oh, it's a spirit! It's that Jack Bunyan perhaps. Hugger's been borrowing money of him, and he's following him about for it. (HUGGER *groans again*) Oh, dear, what have I done to deserve this? I must find out whose spirit it is. (*Goes on his knees and says*)—Speak, disembodied spirit! who art thou?

HUGGER. (*In a hollow voice*) Thy deceased wife.

MUGGER. Yes, yes; she was diseased, she'd the rheumatics awful.

HUGGER. (*Aside*) Curse him, he doesn't understand English. (*Aloud*) Thy departed good lady.

MUGGER. Ha! I recognise the voice! Oh, Susanna Maria Jane, forgive me!

HUGGER. (*Aside*) What a beast of a name! (*Aloud*) No, Moses, I do not forgive you. You murdered me.

MUGGER. Hush! hush, good spirit! somebody might hear you. *I* didn't do it—it was drink.

HUGGER. Moses, you seriously injured me

MUGGER. Not seriously, sweet spirit; I only broke *one* arm.

HUGGER. (*Aside*) Ahem! that was rather rough on Susanna Maria Jane. (*Aloud*) But how about my teeth?

MUGGER. Oh, good spirit, don't mention *that*—they were very loose when I knocked 'em out. Have mercy; spare me!

HUGGER. You had no mercy on me. I shall come and torment you to-night.

MUGGER. No, not to-night, good Susanna Maria Jane—not to-night. I've got quite enough to bear. I've got a lodger, and he's nuts on spirits. He might gallivant with you, Susanna Maria Jane, you hadn't much character to lose when you were here, but I suppose you want to keep respectable now.

(*Aside*) Not that character's of much consequence though where *you* are.

HUGGER. Who is your lodger?

MUGGER. Oh, a beast!

HUGGER. A what?

MUGGER. A wretched prig, as full of bad habits as an egg's full of meat.

HUGGER. A prig?

MUGGER. Yes; but don't you be frightened. Susanna Maria Jane, Moses will swindle any amount of Huggers.

HUGGER. (*Aside*) Will he? Oh! the old scum of the earth. (*Aloud*) Moses! you must cherish him; give him much money and many stimulants; his father and mother are in spirit-land with me, and behave like angels to me.

MUGGER. Eh, what, have you got among Hugger's relations? Then all I can say is, you're mixing with a very shady lot, Susanna Maria Jane, and the sooner you come out of that the better.

HUGGER. (*In his own voice*) What, you calumniating crocodile! my blessed father and mother a shady lot!—take that! (*Flings a bundle on his shelf, at MUGGER, who collapses in a heap in a fright—HUGGER jumps down on him*)

MUGGER. Help! murder! fire! (HUGGER pummels him)

HUGGER. I'll teach you to abuse my parents, you miserable purveyor of marine stores. (*They both struggle up and face each other*)

MUGGER. Very well, Mr. Hugger, I'll have the law on you.

HUGGER. No, you won't, Moses, for two can play at that game. How about my money and investing for Mr. Hugger?

MUGGER. Eh, was that you? whew! Well, you got your money, didn't you, what more do you want? What did you whack me for?

HUGGER. Slanging my sainted parents; but come, Moses, I'll make my peace with you. I've got a customer for you, a friend of mine, who wants to buy some pictures. I've told him *I'm* in the trade, so you must let me sell for you.

MUGGER. Well, I'll do anything if you can only sell a picture. They've hung on my hands till I could cut them up out of spite.

HUGGER. I'll make a good bargain, never fear, only I'm not respectable enough. Now if you will only aid me.

MUGGER. Well, what d'ye want?

HUGGER. Simply your clothes.

MUGGER. What! and leave me——

HUGGER. Peace, bashful being, I only require such an assortment of your habiliments as will enable me to make a decent appearance before our customers.

MUGGER. It strikes me if you're rigged up out of both of us you won't be much of a swell.

HUGGER. Perhaps not; but my demeanour will do the rest! When my late lamented father called me Horatio Nelson——

MUGGER. Stop! Stow that. If you tell me that story again I won't lend you a single thing. It is not a good story to begin with, and I have heard it so often that my soul revolts at the thought of hearing it again.

HUGGER. Ah! You have no appreciation of humour. But come, old boy, you'll lend me some of your clothes. You'll stand in, you know, if I make a good bargain.

MUGGER. All right. What do you want.

HUGGER. (*Reflecting*) Well the coat and trowsers will do. I don't mention your waistcoat, for I fancy your uncle has put in a prior claim, and as for your shirt——

MUGGER. No, Hugger, no. We must draw the

line somewhere, and I draw it at my shirt. Besides you'd scorn such a little thing. I've had it so long that I give you my word it's no bigger than a pocket handkerchief!

HUGGER. Very well, with your coat and trowsers and my own necktie, I shall do famously.

MUGGER. I suppose we're to exchange toggerery.

HUGGER. Eh! oh, of course. (*Aside*) *Are* we. I know a trick worth two of that. I intend to leave Moses planted here.

MUGGER. I believe you're up to some games; but I suppose I must do as you ask.

HUGGER. Forgiving creature. Retire behind that table and divest yourself of the habiliments indispensable to masculine humanity.

(MUGGLER *reluctantly goes behind the table and hands out his trowsers to HUGGER, who nimbly puts them on over his own.*)

MUGGER. Hollo! What are you doing. Stop, stop; we were to exchange.

HUGGER. Oh! we needn't bother about that, it's only for a few minutes. The object is to hide my garments, and it's no use you're wearing them. (*Aside*) If he puts on my inexpressibles I shan't be able to give him the slip.

MUGGER. And what am I to do when the customer comes?

HUGGER. Have you got any money?

MUGGER. Three half-pence.

HUGGER. Well, let me see, this spec will run to a half-penny. Here you are. Go next door and have a toothful.

MUGGER. Next door. Why you forget. (*Points to his legs*) It will be precious cold, to say nothing of creating a trifling sensation in the place.

HUGGER. What, has it come to this, that Moses

Mugger refuses to go to a public when a friend stands treat?

MUGGER. Stands treat? The skinflint gives me a ha'penny, and calls that standing treat.

HUGGER. No, Moses, no! I can't trust my ears.

MUGGER. Egad, and I can't trust my legs.

HUGGER. A mere matter of detail! Take a rug.

MUGGER. Hugger, it's impossible! Nobody but a Highlander can go about without his trousers. Come, Hugger, let us exchange. (*Knock heard at door*)

HUGGER. Hark!—there's the customer. We must hide you here.

MUGGER. Oh, horror. Hugger—I implore you, give me back my bags!

HUGGER. No, no; there's no time! Come, we must hide you. Hark! (*Knock heard again*)

MUGGER. What *can* I do? The pictures are not large enough.

HUGGER. The pictures. Good idea—I have it! You shall be a picture, your charmingly sensitive feelings will then not be wounded.

MUGGER. What d'ye mean?

HUGGER. Simply this—we will use this picture frame; it shall be supported on the table, near the wall, in the corner; and, with your head draped, you shall gaze vacantly through it. The leaf of the table will hide your legs. You will make an admirable picture! (*Aside*) Quite an old master—in the matter of dirt!

MUGGER. Oh, Walker!

HUGGER. I beg your pardon—the party you mention was not a painter; and the idea is a good one, we want an extra picture to show, and you'll do very well. Come, bustle about!

MUGGER. I knew he'd do me! Oh, I wish I'd never taken a lodger!

(*The table is arranged against the wall, with a picture frame on it and a cloth over it—MUGGER puts his head into the frame, and assumes the look of a "Portrait of a Gentleman"—a knock is heard, and HUGGER opens door, c. Enter CUSTOMER, c.*)

HUGGER. (*To CUSTOMER, blandly*) Good morning, sir—the works of art are all on view!

CUSTOMER. Thank you. (*Looks round the room*)

HUGGER. Yes, sir; you see around you the old masters. They were called masters, as you are doubtless aware, because they taught drawing; the epithet old was applied on account of the general leeriness of their dispositions.

CUSTOMER. Indeed!

HUGGER. Yes. That's a nice picture. (*As HUGGER is speaking he is tapping various pictures with a little cane, and occasionally touches MUGGER on the nose, greatly to his disgust*) It belonged to a nobleman, who ruined himself on the turf, and he was so sorry to part with it that he wept, sir; and we left him standing ankle deep in tears on the steps of his old manorial hall. That's a Raffle, that is.

CUSTOMER. A raffle? How much a throw?

HUGGER. No, no—Raffle, the old master! The price, sir, is, to you, one pound ten. Have a cigar,

CUSTOMER. Thank you.

(*As HUGGER speaks he goes to MUGGER's mantel-piece and takes a cigar wrapped up in paper, which he gives to CUSTOMER—MUGGER's face expresses extreme disgust—CUSTOMER and HUGGER walk up L., and MUGGER's eyes follow them anxiously—CUSTOMER notices it.*)

MUGGER. Hang him. My Sunday cigar.

CUSTOMER. Dear me. Was not that portrait's head turned the other way? (*Indicating MUGGER, who looks solemn*)

HUGGER. Ah, sir, *that's* the illusion. *That's* the leeriness of a very old master; the eyes of a good portrait always seem to follow you about.

CUSTOMER. May I ask whose portrait that is?

HUGGER. (*Playfully tapping MUGGER on the nose*) That, sir, is the portrait of a famous Venetian malefactor who was hung by order of the Republic, and died with curses on his lips.

CUSTOMER. Ah! he looks a desperate character.

HUGGER. Yes, the old master has caught the felonious expression remarkably well.

(*During this speech, to MUGGER's horror,—HUGGER has pocketed various little articles on the mantelpiece.*)

CUSTOMER. Well, I'll take that Raffle. Here's the money. (*Gives HUGGER money which he immediately pockets*) By the way what's the price of the malefactor, I've taken rather a fancy to him. (*MUGGER's face expresses delight*)

HUGGER. (*Confused*) The malefactor. Oh! he's not for sale, the fact is, he's a friend of the family,—a relation,—no I don't mean that.

CUSTOMER. Oh! I wouldn't deprive you of a relation for worlds. Good morning.

HUGGER. Good morning, sir.

(*Exit CUSTOMER, c.—HUGGER closely follows him out, turning round at the door, putting his fingers to his nose, and saying, "Good morning, malefactor."*)

MUGGER. Stop, come back I say, come back,—(*Is about to rush out when he recollects his condi-*

tion and stops) Oh! I can't run after him. The perfidious wretch, after subjecting me to all these indignities, I shan't see a penny of the money. I know what he'll do—he'll drink it. (*Wceps*) I should do it myself in his place; what shall I do for clothes. Happy thought, the old closet—(*Turns round and searches in closet in wall, L., brings out a policeman's dress, which he rapidly puts on*) I knew I had some old clothes, I bought them from a member of the force who skedaddled. Now I can be revenged, Hugger will come in maudlin, and I'll arrest him. "Venetian malefactor" indeed.—(*While he speaks MUGGER has rapidly made up his clothes into a dummy of himself; which he places partially under the table, lying with its face to the ground*)

(*Enter HUGGER, c.*)

HUGGER. (*Slightly obfuscated, singing*) "For he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny." Yes! Horatio Nelson Hugger, you *are* a jolly good fellow—shake hands, old boy. (*Shakes his left hand affectionately with his right*) Where's honest Moses. (*Sees MUGGER standing erect in his policeman's dress*) Hollo! Active and intelligent officer! Somebody's wanted? Is it Moses, or is it me? I must pull myself together. (*To MUGGER*) Good morning, sir.

MUGGER. Your name's Hugger, I believe?

HUGGER. A man's not bound to criminate himself, but I'll go so far as to admit that my name *might* be Hugger.

MUGGER. Then, sir, it is my painful duty to arrest you.

HUGGER. Arrest me? What for? Man of spotless character, keep a gig, and been vaccinated on both arms.

MUGGER. Yes, sir. From information I have

received I have to arrest you for the murder of Moses Mugger, Esq., dealer in marine stores and antiquities, residing at No. 5, Wobblerboy Street, lodgings to let for a single gentleman.

HUGGER. (*Aghast*) Murder! Little Moses. Oh, I must be dreaming. That last tumbler has given me D. T. The active and intelligent's merely a delusion, like a spider or a black dog. Blue devil, avant!

MUGGER. Which it's you that's wanted, Mr. Hugger? Come, sir, you'd better go quietly.

HUGGER. Peace, idiotic myrmidon of a paternal government, I have murdered nobody.

MUGGER. What! you villain, with the tangled corpse a lying at your feet. Look there. (*Points to dummy lying on its face partially concealed under the table*)

HUGGER. (*Starting*) Good gracious! This is a mistake. Moses! Moses! Wake up!

MUGGER. No, sir. He's a-gone to his long sleep. You've murdered a superior man, Mr. Hugger, with an eligible semi-detached apartment to let.

HUGGER. (*Aside*) This is horrible. I always had an absurd prejudice against being hanged. (*To MUGGER*) I assure you, sir, I had nothing to do with the slaughter of my unfortunate friend. He has committed suicide, I am certain. He frequently threatened to kill himself.

MUGGER. Oh, he did, did he?

HUGGER. Bless you, yes. I had constantly to hide his razors. Poor Moses, he was rather touched here, you know. (*Taps his forehead significantly*)

MUGGER. Ah! off his nut, was he?

HUGGER. Quite mad, I assure you. He had all sorts of delusions. He used to fancy himself a bottlejack—spin round to the right—click—then whirl away again to the left. (*As HUGGER speaks, he imitates the motion he describes*)

MUGGER. (*Aside*) Oh, that I should live to hear this! (*Aloud*) Dear me, was he as bad as that?

HUGGER. Yes, frequently. (*Aside*) I think I can square the active and intelligent. (*Aloud*) So you see, officer, it's no use arresting me. What'll you take?

MUGGER. In pursuance of my duty, sir, I shall take you to the police station; but in the mean time I don't mind a drain.

HUGGER. Certainly; here's a bottle of the right stuff. (HUGGER *produces a bottle*)

MUGGER. (*Aside*) The wretch! That's how he's been spending my money. (*Aloud*) Thank you, sir. (HUGGER *pulls the table a little forward, and they sit down and fill their glasses*)

HUGGER. Poor Moses, if he'd been alive now, we might have had a rubber, but, egad, he's playing dummy now with a vengeance, ha, ha!

MUGGER. Ha, ha! very good. (*Aside*) Unfeeling vagabond!

HUGGER. Ah, and it's not the first time he's been under the table I'll warrant you.

MUGGER. What, sir, did he drink?

HUGGER. Gallons, dear boy. He was always called boozy Moses.

MUGGER. Oh, was he. (*Aside*) I shall throw the bottle at his head directly. (*Aloud*) Well, sir, I must do my duty and take you away.

HUGGER. No, no. Come, now, you know it's suicide. Can't we square it.

MUGGER. Well, if it *is* suicide of course it ain't murder. How much have you got?

HUGGER. Here's a sovereign. (*Hands one over, which MUGGER takes*)

MUGGER. (*Aside*) Why he must have spent half a quid in lush. (*Aloud*) That's something! Haven't you any more?

HUGGER. No, but Moses might. Shall I look in his pockets?

MUGGER. (*Aside*) This is too much. (*Aloud*) No, sir, I will be no party to rifling the body of your dead friend. You are a heartless villain, sir, and I shall arrest you for murder.

HUGGER. Spare me! (*Goes down on his knees*)

MUGGER. No, sir; I shall conduct you to the—ahem!—to the gallows.

HUGGER. Mercy, mercy! (*Grovels down over the body, which collapses*)

MUGGER. No, sir; you'll be hanged by the neck, till you are dead!

HUGGER. O-o-o-oh! Don't say that! (*Feeling the dummy very flat, he suddenly raises himself*) Eh!—what's this? Moses is mighty soft. (*Turns the dummy over and then looks up*)

MUGGER. (*Helps himself to a glass of grog and drinks it*) The malefactor looks towards you, Mr. Hugger!

HUGGER. (*Jumping up in a fury*) Sold—sold! Oh, you viper!

MUGGER. Now you can play dummy with “boozy Moses.”

HUGGER. Where's my sovereign, you vile impostor?

MUGGER. Your sovereign? No, no; I'm not quite so touched in the head as to part now.

HUGGER. Ah, well!—I give in. Moses, you score one. I forgive you—the biter has been bit. But, oh, Moses, what could not you and I do together? Let us go into partnership, and prey upon society!

MUGGER. Agreed. (*They shake hands*) We will deal in marine stores together.

HUGGER. We will let semi-detached apartments together; and *take in* lodgers.

MUGGER. We will: and sell “old masters” together.

HUGGER. And relieve the bloated capitalist of any articles of attire—such as jewellery and pocket handkerchiefs—with which he can dispense without inconvenience. We will promote companies and start newspapers; we will indulge in all those miscellaneous commercial operations, which when conducted on a small scale are called thieving, but a large scale, financing.

MUGGER. We will. But look here. Honour among——

HUGGER. Can you doubt me? Honour bright!

MUGGER. Hugger!

HUGGER. Mugger!

(Stage embrace, during which each picks the other's pocket, and extracts therefrom a handkerchief.)

Curtain



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